

SECURITY INFORMATION

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July 27, 1953


PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

MEMORANDUM TO: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD

SUBJECT: Combatting Communist Influence Among  
Students and Intellectuals

Attached herewith is a study (PSB D-33/3) developed with the concurrence of an inter-departmental working group that was suggested by the Planning Board memorandum, "Communist Influence among Students and Intellectuals," dated June 26, 1953, referred to the Psychological Strategy Board by Mr. Robert Cutler. (Annex "A")

If the Board members do not object, I would like to use this study as the basis of my reply to Mr. Cutler. The study will also be sent to the inter-departmental panel coordinating PSB D-33, "The U. S. Doctrinal Program, June 29, 1953" for its immediate attention.

  
Acting Director

Enclosure:

DRAFT - Study, Combatting Influence  
among Students and Intellectuals, 45  
PSB D-33/3, July 27, 1953, COPY No. 45

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SECURITY INFORMATION

SECRET

1  
of 1 page

July 27, 1953

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Combatting Communist Influence among Students and Intellectuals

1. The increasing "Communist influence among students and intellectuals," which was considered at the NSC Planning Board meeting of June 29, has been a concern of government officials for years. The PSB has now approved the U. S. Doctrinal Program (PSB D-33, June 29, 1953) which provides an over-all attack on this basic problem. This Program will now be implemented, and greater emphasis should be given to the more rapid development of coordinated activity in this effort.

2. Communist influence among students and intellectuals outside of the USSR has been developing for thirty-five years with little organized counter-action. The Communists concentrated on this target group because of its influence on policy and opinion formation in "the backward areas" and because the intellectuals have a disproportionate influence over the youth. The Communists have carried on their ideological campaign through the extensive publication and distribution of a cheap permanent literature which, with the appearance of objectivity and scholarship, supported major Communist themes. Their native book programs were supplemented by scholarly front organizations which provided continuing stimulus to these individuals. National-Soviet Friendship Societies continually foster Soviet cultural activities and exchanges. The Communists also employ an exchange of persons program, particularly students, professors and artists, averaging 45,000 persons a year, to increase their influence among intellectuals and students.

3. This Soviet effort to the intellectuals has not been completely ignored by the U.S. Particularly in "the backward areas," American information programs have emphasized that students and intellectuals were a major target. The American exchange of persons program has concentrated

DRAFT

SECURITY INFORMATION  
SECRET

PSB D-33/3

July 27, 1953

on individuals who fit into the category of intellectuals. Likewise, public affairs officers have attempted to concentrate on local intellectuals. MSA and TCA programs have assumed that their success will be proportionate to the acceptance and support given by the local elite. Hence, these economic programs provide for educational activities and production to influence students and intellectuals. Similarly, CIA has developed significant non-attributable operations which are aimed directly at this target. A special report can be prepared on CIA's activities if the Board so desires.

4. A major weakness of the American approach to students and intellectuals has been that, too frequently, our general information materials are not directly attuned to the interests and desires of the intellectual audience. Foreign intellectuals are not seriously influenced by radio programs and not greatly interested in news bulletins or releases. This target is not particularly impressed by motion pictures or by periodical literature which is not specially prepared from the intellectual approach. The average periodical literature is considered beneath this target's dignity. Students and intellectuals tend to rely on scholarly or highly intellectual materials, particularly materials in books which they can criticize, analyze and use to their own advantage. It is in this field of permanent literature that the American effort has not provided sufficient counter to the Soviet approach.

5. While the NSC Planning Board has considered a paper on Communist influence among students and intellectuals in Iran, attention should be called to the fact that this same problem of Communist influence on the students and intellectuals is characteristic of the entire Free World. The problem is particularly serious in the so-called "backward areas," especially in India and the Middle East, but intellectuals in France particularly and Western Europe, the Far East and even in Latin America have been pressured by Soviet ideological approaches. While special emphasis can be given to the implementation of U. S. Doctrinal Program in the Middle East, it must

SECURITY INFORMATION  
SECRET2  
of 7 pages

July 27, 1953

be realized that appeals to intellectuals cannot be delimited to certain areas. Intellectuals must be appealed to as a distinct group. Area considerations may enter into the adaptations of the general approach to special area problems, but care must be taken that intellectuals in one area do not get the impression that they are a unique special target of American interests lest the effort be characterized as a mere propaganda movement. However, if the intellectuals of one area find that the materials made available to them are also available to intellectuals in neighboring areas and throughout the intellectual world, the movement becomes a challenge to their intellectual capacities, not as nationalists, but as intellectuals.

6. While the approach to students and intellectuals must be considered as a global problem, there are particular factors in Iran and the Middle East generally which require special attention. A good portion of the success of the Communist influences among students in this area is not truly an intellectual appeal, but an organizational development of students by Communist front apparatus. Students, who have a traditional tendency towards radicalism and opposition to authority, fall easy prey to Communist student organization. Student organizations, characteristic of the American and European university tradition, have not been developed in the Middle East. Students who "want to be in the swing" must join a Communist-controlled student group and thereby they can be manipulated for Communist purposes.

7. Another factor, most powerful in Iran but also endemic in the "backward areas", requires particular attention in any effort directed at students and intellectuals. This second factor is the extremely sensitive, practically paranoiac, nationalism. The oil issue in Iran has tended to make the Iranians not only anti-British but anti-American. Any intellectual effort which might be identified as "selling the U. S." or as a strictly American propaganda effort would be doomed to stagnation and defeat because of this nationalistic phobia. However, this nationalism can be manipulated,

July 27, 1953

particularly among students and intellectuals, to the advantage of American objectives and to the weakening of Communist influences. Just as the Communists now operate, the U. S. can unofficially assist indigenous authors and publishers to produce and circulate critical analyses of Communist doctrine and the viewpoints of the West. Native authors and groups silently friendly to America can challenge the intellectuals to employ their abilities and intellectual powers to improve the status and condition of their country. Too many local intellectuals have been sterile, and spend their days complaining, without constructively contributing to their country's development. Material could be produced which would pique their nationalism and also their intellectual capacity to develop intelligent and rational solutions to their local problems. Their present nationalistic phobias might thereby be turned away from anti-Americanism into efforts to arrive at constructive solutions to their country's political, economic and social problems.

8. There are many things which the U. S. Government can initiate to weaken Communist influence, as well as to strengthen traditional Western influences among students and intellectuals. The U. S. Doctrinal Program provides for a more extensive and intensive use of serious books and of highly intellectual periodical materials, as well as the fostering of associations and meetings among intellectuals. However, the U. S. Government is not the only contact for influencing students and intellectuals. Intellectuals are actually suspicious of governments in general and, as a result of Communist influence, of the American Government in particular. The same suspicions are not held against American private organizations, particularly intellectual or research groups. Hence, the U. S. Doctrinal Program should, as a major aspect of its development, insure that non-governmental organizations, scholarly, research, fraternal, etc., which might contribute to the influencing of students and intellectuals, are

July 27, 1953

stimulated to contribute to this effort. The Ford Foundation is only one of the numerous avenues of non-governmental enterprise which should be explored. The American Library Association, the Near East Foundation, the American Friends of the Middle East, the many hyphenated national societies, as well as the numerous learned societies, should be encouraged to develop and increase their contacts with, and their contributions to, students and intellectuals. Foundations could endow professorial chairs in local universities. Societies could adopt local libraries or make quarterly contributions of new books to them. Learned societies could send complimentary copies of their annual reports to major college libraries. This entire field of non-governmental organization participation in a national program must be thoroughly, yet rapidly, explored in the process of coordinating and implementing the U. S. Doctrinal Program.

9. The participation of non-government agencies may be one means of contributing to the solution of a major problem closely connected with Communist influence among students and intellectuals. In many areas of the world, particularly in the Middle East, students and intellectuals are an unhappy, frustrated group because their local economic and social system does not provide sufficient opportunity for reasonably decent livelihood. Unemployment or employment in activities considered unbefitting their lofty level makes these individuals more ready victims of Communist tirades on revolution to secure a better future. The U. S. Government cannot directly do much to modify the existent economic and social systems in an area. Non-governmental organizations, however, particularly local organizations with international contacts, can properly foster moderate changes and support individuals favoring such orderly development.

10. While much can be undertaken within a short time to combat Communist influence among students and intellectuals, it should not be assumed that such activity, even when most perfectly implemented, will have startling

July 27, 1953

or immediate results. The specific target groups, because of economic and professional grievances, have a generally hostile attitude towards American and Western attitudes and mores, which it will take time to modify. Intellectual movements and ideas take time to develop and even more time to become effective. The U. S. is entering into a field which has long been occupied by intelligent and well trained Communists. Nevertheless, this Communist influence must be checked among students and intellectuals. The effort must be started and it must be carried on with constancy, consistency and confidence. We should not passively rely on the assumption that in the realm of ideas and intellectual activities the American approach is superior to the authoritarianism of Communism.

CONCLUSIONS OF WORKING GROUP

1. That the U. S. Doctrinal Program (PSB D-33, June 29, 1953) be implemented by the participating government agencies as a matter of high priority.
2. That the problems of production and effective distribution of materials appealing to students and intellectuals be rapidly resolved and effectively implemented.
3. That, while the approach to students and intellectuals must be approached as a world problem, immediate implementation of aspects of the Doctrinal Program in the Middle Eastern area should be emphasized.
4. That the pertinent agency intensify its efforts to counter Soviet organizational influences among students, initially, in the so-called "backward areas" and foster the development of student groups with the approach of the West. As experience is gained, this activity should be fostered elsewhere.
5. That emphasis be given by the appropriate agency to fostering non-attributable efforts among the local intellectuals to re-indoctrinate themselves in their own traditions and to develop native and rational

SECRET

July 27, 1953

solutions to their own problems.

6. That in this program to reduce Communist influence among students and intellectuals, private foundations, learned and professional societies, and other non-government groups be stimulated to contribute their specialized efforts.

7. That an effort be made, partially through non-government American organizations, to develop, with the assistance and approval of the local governments concerned, an economic environment which will provide greater economic opportunity for the developing intellectuals of an area.

SECURITY INFORMATION  
SECRET

7  
of 7 pages



SECURITY INFORMATION  
SECRET

ANNEX "A"  
PSB D-33/3  
Jul. 27, 1953

COPY

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 29, 1953

Dear George:

Attached is a memorandum entitled, "Communist influence among students and intellectuals," dated June 26, 1953, which we considered at the Planning Board Meeting today.

The suggestion was made that this memorandum be referred to the Psychological Strategy Board to consider whether some program could be developed to meet the problem raised in the memorandum.

In this connection, it was thought that the Ford Foundation might be interested in lending support to any such program.

Would you take this matter up with the Psychological Strategy Board, and advise the Planning Board at some future time what has developed.

Sincerely yours,

/s/  
ROBERT CUTLER  
Special Assistant  
to the President

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[REDACTED]

Acting Director  
Psychological Strategy Board

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2000 Wilson Place, N.W.  
[REDACTED]

SECURITY INFORMATION  
SECRET

1  
of 1 page

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SECURITY INFORMATIONSECRET

ANNEX "A"

PSB D-33/3

Jul. 27, 1953

COPYEXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON

June 26, 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL CUTLER

SUBJECT: Communist Influence among Students and Intellectuals

1. In the course of his talk yesterday Ambassador Henderson again mentioned the strong and ever increasing influence of the Tudeh party among students and intellectuals in Iran; and also the great difficulties he experienced in countering such influence.

2. This is a subject about which I have been worried for a very long time. I believe that communist influence on these important groups not only in Iran but in all the backward countries of the world stems not only from a hopeless economic future but also from the decay of traditional religious beliefs.

3. In view of the President's comments at yesterday's Council meeting and the widespread expressions of concern about this problem isn't it now time to bring together the responsible parties in an effort to survey the problem, and try to find ways and means to bring before these students and intellectuals the democratic philosophy? It seems to me that this represents an opportunity to use the services not only of Government agencies but of many private foundations, including the Ford Foundation.

4. Perhaps you would like to mention this to the President and, if he agrees, ask the P.S.B. to be responsible for coordinating a study of the problem. The P.S.B. membership includes, together with Mr. Stassen, the Government agencies with responsibility in this general area. I realize that it will be hard to frame a program but we should not stand idly by while the communists take over large numbers of the younger generation.

/s/

S. Everett Gleason

SECURITY INFORMATIONSECRET1  
of 1 page

SECRET

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FROM:

Psychological Strategy Board (via

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